

Ethical News

The newsletter of the AEJMC
Media Ethics Division

Summer 2004
Vol. 7, No. 4

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Mission accomplished. (Really!)

New programs and partnerships for MED highlight the past year

Sandra L. Borden
division head

I recently finished filing the Division's annual report and thought I would share some of the highlights with you. I think you'll be impressed with all the Division has accomplished.

One of our major goals this year was to boost the quantity and quality of research paper submissions. I am pleased to report that faculty submissions went up from 17 last year to 24 this year (a nearly 40% increase); graduate submissions more than doubled, from 5 to 11. The overall acceptance rate was 49%. Research Chair Erik Ugland deserves credit for the fine job he did running this year's competition. My thanks also to all the reviewers.

The Top Faculty Paper was awarded to Maggie Jones Patterson and Steve Urbanski, both of Duquesne University, for "What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke Say About the Press and the Erosion of Public Trust." The winner of the Carol Burnett/University of Hawai'i/AEJMC Prize for Excellence in Ethics Research by a graduate student is Jenn Burseson Mackay, University of Alabama for "The Media Ethics Necessity." The runner-up is Bastiaan Vanacker, University of Minnesota, "Finding Global Values in Journalism Ethics:

I think you'll
be impressed
with all
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has accomplished.

A Comparative Analysis of Five News Council Rulings." With funding from the Burnett Foundation, we were also able to provide nominal travel support for the third student author accepted. My thanks to Tom Brislin for his continuing support of graduate students interested in ethics.

One of the initiatives we undertook to increase interest in the paper competition was a special call exploring the connections between ethics and media literacy. A special panel with the four top-rated papers from this competition is scheduled for 5-6:30 p.m. Aug. 5, preceded by a related teaching panel from 3:15-4:45 p.m. called "A Nationwide Endeavor: Tackling Media Literacy in Canada." The top paper in the special competition was " 'I Noticed More Violence': The Effects of a Media Literacy Program on Knowledge and Attitudes About Media Violence,"

by Erica Scharrer, Massachusetts-Amherst. Special thanks goes to PF&R Chair Wendy Barger who came up with the media literacy theme for the special call and organized the related teaching panel.

The paper call also specified for the first time that the Division would recognize the paper with the most relevance to working professionals. This is an award the members voted to adopt several years ago, but we did not have a process in place until this year to fully implement it. The Professional Relevance Award was given to Susan Keith of Rutgers University for "The Last Line of Defense in Matters of Ethics? Copy Editors' Ethics Role Conceptions." Thanks to Wendy and the other reviewers who served on the committee making the final selection for this award.

Division members also responded to Programming Head Kris Bunton's call to capitalize on Canada for this year's convention program. If you've had a chance to look at this year's program, you'll notice we have about 20 non-AEJMC members on our program and at least 10 presenters (members and non-members) from Canada. The topics that will include a Canadian perspective include journalism education, online ethics,

See **ACCOMPLISHED**, page 2

Intersection: Media ethics and politics

Patrick Lee Plaisance
teaching chair

Tucked deep inside *The New York Times* one day the third week in May – on page A23 – was a news story about a decision highly critical of the Bush administration. (The fact that there often are such "underplayed" anti-Bush stories buried in the back of the Times and most other major metro dailies regularly puts the lie to the relentless liberal-media-bias myth, but that's for another newsletter.) The story reported the ruling by the General Accounting Office that said the Bush administration violated federal law by producing television videos designed as news segments to publicize the new Medicare law. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services developed the videos, which featured a "reporter" doing a stand-up report suggesting the new law will be a boon to elderly Americans. The videos were aired by at least 40 television stations in 33 markets. While the ruling by the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, focused on the fact that the administration failed to disclose that the videos were government-produced, it also noted that the videos violated the prohibition on using taxpayer money for "propaganda."

When the controversy over the videos first surfaced this spring, I brought it up in my media ethics

See **INTERSECTION**, page 3

MED highlights at 2004 convention

Wednesday

- Panels on ethics education and public relations
- MED paper session featuring award-winning papers

Thursday

- Panels on online journalism and media literacy
- Paper and poster sessions
- MED members' meeting

Friday

- Panels on religion, war coverage, convergence, and crime coverage

Saturday

- Panels on offensive ads and ethics courses
- Annual teaching workshop

Full schedule: Pages 4-5



Aug. 4-7, 2004

Ethical Briefing

Send items for this column to:
Genelle Belmas, newsletter editor
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APPE announces call for papers

The 14th Annual Meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics will be held Feb. 24-27 in San Antonio, Texas. Submissions are invited on ethical issues in various fields (e.g., public administration, law, the environment, accounting, engineering, computer science, research, business, medicine, journalism and the academy) and on issues that cut across professions. Special consideration will be given to topics that deal with ethical issues which cut across at least two disciplines or professions, and are co-authored by persons from different disciplines. Teaching demonstrations, discussion of moral education and presentations on ethics curriculum development are welcome. This year we especially invite papers on environmental ethics and journalism.

Included in the APPE annual meeting will be the mid-year meeting of the AEJMC Media Ethics Division and members of the International Society for Environmental Ethics, co-sponsors of this year's Mini Conference.

The deadline for paper submissions is Oct. 15, 2004. The Call for Papers, which includes the submission guidelines, can be downloaded at <http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/callforpapers2005.pdf>

For more information, contact Brian Schrag, executive secretary of APPE, at appe@indiana.edu.

'Ethics Across the Curriculum'

The Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum is hosting the 6th International Conference on Ethics Across the Curriculum from Oct. 14-16 at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore. The theme is "Ethics and Organizations," with the general question, "How can ethics education effectively address both the moral responsibility and accountability of individuals within organizations as well as the ethical accountability of organizations themselves?"

Authors of papers which do not address the theme of "Ethics and Organizations" are still encouraged to submit proposals.

Submissions may be abstracts, papers, panels or other standard forms of presentation. They are to be postmarked by Aug. 9 and sent to secretary-treasurer Steven Scales, by e-mail to sscales@towson.edu, or by hard copy to Dr. Stephen Scales, Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Towson University, 8000 York Road, Towson MD 21252.

Papers should be formatted for blind review, and any questions about submissions should be directed to the directors.

2003-04 was year of growth for MED

ACCOMPLISHED, from page 1

religious perspectives on public policy news and American media coverage of Canadian crimes. Kris did a great job lining up a varied, interesting program for Toronto.

One of the big changes you'll see in MED's convention program is the new Saturday afternoon slot for the Media Ethics Teaching Workshop. Workshop organizers Bill Babcock and Ginny Whitehouse suggested the move, plus a new format organized around the theme of "The Impact of Infotainment on Media Ethics & Democracy," to attract a broader audience. The workshop begins at noon with a luncheon for keynote speaker James Upshaw of Oregon. In recognition of the important pedagogical role this workshop has played in the field for beginning ethics teachers, the workshop also includes a "teaching boot camp" beginning at 4:45 p.m.

Another of this year's successes was our first mid-year meeting with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, an interdisciplinary group. The meeting was Feb. 26-28 in Cincinnati. MED held a members meeting and programmed two panels organized by Patrick Plaisance, Lee Wilkins and Bill Babcock. In addition, MED members organized two invited panels through APPE and had one competitive panel and three competitive papers accepted. APPE already has agreed to host MED's mid-year meeting in 2005; it will be Feb. 25-27 in San Antonio. We are especially encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations. You should be receiving the call in the mail or

go to: www.indiana.edu/~appe/program.html.

We are nearing the end of our one-year trial agreement with the Journal of Mass Media Ethics to provide a subscription as a benefit of MED membership. The partnership required a sizable dues increase, but so far the hike does not seem to have had a negative impact on membership. The JMME partnership will be on the agenda for our members meeting in Toronto (8:30-10 p.m. Aug. 5).

Once again, the Division supported the Colloquia 2000 Series, aimed at stimulating collaborative scholarship on important issues in media ethics. The 2004 colloquium on media, ethics and politics — organized by Lee Wilkins — was held at the University of Missouri-Columbia. And we continued to have one of the best newsletters in AEJMC thanks to the efforts of Editor Genelle Belmas, Associate Editor Bill Reader, Webmaster Tom Bivins and all the members who contributed interesting articles related to teaching and professional practice.

Finally, I've asked Tom to set up a media ethics experts link on the Division's Web site that lists MED members who are willing to comment about media performance for interviews, community workshops, lectures, etc. This is an important public service provided by people who are arguably in the best position to speak knowledgeably about the media's ethical strengths and weaknesses. For more information, click on the "Find a Media Ethics Expert" link on the Web site. Several members are signed up already. I hope you'll add your name to the list.

Make the most of your poster session

You don't need expensive software, fancy computers, gigantic printers, years of design experience or hours of free time to make a great poster for an AEJMC scholar-to-scholar session. All you need is a word-processing program, a simple printer, a couple of hours, and this handy tip sheet, which you can download and print by going to:

http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tbivins/aejmc_ethics/PDFs/poster.pdf

Between you and me:
Get the most of your 'scholar-to-scholar' opportunity

ABSTRACT
AEJMC's poster sessions offer a lot to presenters and observers alike. The biggest drawback is that few scholars feel comfortable with their design skills, and as such create research layouts that are confusing, uninteresting, or uninviting. This tip sheet offers a few ideas to help non-designers develop simple, easy-to-follow layouts that highlight the most important thing: the findings of your research.

1. Introduction:
CATCH THEIR ATTENTION
• Present your paper's title in large, easy-to-read type. Avoid "fancy" fonts that are difficult to read.
• Use panels to present the different sections of your paper (like the design of this tip-sheet). Use bulleted lists to set off key points.
• Visual elements attract interest, but they are not necessary. If you don't have photos, charts, or illustrations, use typographical elements as graphics, such as pull-quotes.

2. Literature Review:
ORGANIZATION MADE EASY
• Large layouts are more effective if organized into vertical columns, so readers don't have to shuffle their feet back and forth.
• Use vertical lines (hand-drawn are fine) to delineate columns; avoid the over-use of boxes, which isolate components.
• Typography is key. Use a simple, sans-serif font at 18 to 24 point size for body text (try other type sizes than the ones in the pull-down menu; you can manually enter "21.3" or whatever point size you want). Headers should be half again as large as body type. Your title should be two-to-three times as large as the headers.

3. Theoretical considerations:
POWERPOINT IS NOT FOR POSTERS
• Avoid the temptation to just print your PowerPoint slides or to pin your 30-page manuscript to the board (I've seen both tactics tried at AEJMC conferences, neither to good effect). Rather, take content from existing formats and reform it in a design or word-processing program.
• Use white-space to set off different elements, but do so with consistency. If you have two inches between two panels, then use two inches between all panels. Avoid "trapped" space, or empty areas surrounded by panels; move panels toward the middle and leave that empty space on the edges.
• Consistency is the key to good design: consistent type sizes, consistent column widths, consistent white-space. Your design is an interface; don't ask your readers to re-learn the interface mid-way through your poster.

4. Methodology:
PLOTTER PRINTER NOT REQUIRED
• If you aren't comfortable with design software, just use your word processing program to set up type on multiple sheets of paper, or "tiles," that you can tape together.
• Use legal-sized paper to give you some extra space: 11-by-17 ("jodger") paper would be ideal, but you need a printer that can handle the larger size (or you can photocopy onto larger paper at 150%).
• Elements "like" elements at home: hotel beds make lousy composing tables. Use a short poster table for transport.
• Always bring two sets of tiles, just in case one gets damaged or lost (if you try, don't put both sets in your checked bags; keep one in a carry-on). And save your files to a CD-R; the hotel's printer could save the day.

5. Data:
EXPLAIN YOUR CHARTS
Titles tell stories: Use them



• Organize data in a logical order: ascending, descending, alphabetical, chronological — whatever best helps your readers put the findings into context. Don't make them hunt for the context.
• Remember, not all of your viewers will have strong backgrounds in statistics; don't isolate them by listing a "p value" without a simple explanation of what that means.
• Avoid "chartjunk": clip art, gratuitous color, 3D effects, or type effects that do no work and may actually distort or disguise your data. With charts, simpler is better.

6. Conclusion
ITS ONLY A POSTER
• Your poster has a lifespan of about two hours; don't waste days or weeks developing a masterpiece when a potboiler will do.
• Pin a few of your business cards to the board, so interested scholars or students can take them if you are distracted.
• Keep a few copies of your full paper on hand, just in case you encounter somebody who is really interested in your work.
• Keep digital copies of your poster files as templates for future posters.

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Tell us more about how you tell us

Wendy N. Barger
PF&R Chair

When four civilian contractors were killed earlier this spring in Fallujah, Iraq, and their charred and mutilated bodies were hung from a bridge over the Euphrates River and then dragged through town, news organizations had to decide what to do with the grisly photographs and videotaped images of the scene. The decisions varied, and as citizens opened their papers, turned on their televisions and connected to the Internet, they saw the different results of those deliberations.

The decisions, as well as the justifications for them, dominated discussions on journalism Web sites in the days following the incident, and newsmen from across the country shared with each other their perspectives on their own choices. But only a few news organizations chose to talk about their decisions with their readers and viewers.

Why was that the case? Of course, there is only so much space in a newspaper and so much time on a newscast to tell the stories of the day without also having to explain the rationale for

choosing the stories. But isn't there some educational value in giving audiences a glimpse into the largely unknown process of reporting, selecting, editing and publishing the news? After all, most news audiences — readers, listeners and viewers — have little idea about the reflections, dialogues and eventual decisions that go on behind the scenes in the newsroom as well as out in the field. We see only the final product, the results, of the news telling process.

The call for communicating with audiences about the news process is a call for transparency. And I would argue that whenever an organization goes through tough ethical brainwork to decide how to present — or perhaps, not present — a news item, it's more than worth the effort to be as transparent as possible, to explain that rationale to the public.

It's certain that some members of the public were offended by the graphic images from Fallujah that showed up on the front pages of newspapers and as the top story in news broadcasts. Others were likely upset that some news organizations shied away from showing the gruesome images at the expense of really telling the story.

Regardless of the reaction, allowing readers and viewers access to the kind of deliberation that members of the press surely undertook when making decisions about the Fallujah photos would accomplish at least two things. First, a policy of transparency would shed light on the little-understood news gathering and reporting process. And, second, it would more than likely lead to increased respect for the news tellers and the ethically laden acts in which they engage every day.

My local newspaper, The (Minneapolis) Star Tribune, and other papers across the country engage in some of this dialogue, particularly through their public editors, or ombudsmen. But this practice of justification is usually reactive; it's a response to a reader concern or complaint. What's holding journalists back from acting proactively, from taking seriously the relationship they have with the public, and from recognizing that sometimes choices need to be justified? In a time when public trust in the media is dropping and citizens are turning away in greater numbers than they ever have before, it seems there is no better time than the present for a policy of transparency.

When media ethics and politics intersect

INTERSECTION, from page 1

course as a case of questionable PR behavior. A lot of students didn't understand what the problem was. The government knows what it's doing, they said. The Bush people have a right to try to persuade people of their views.

"The government knows what it's doing." Hmmm. Such a ripe moment for any teacher....

These are amazing, historic months in American politics — and in media ethics as well. And that's why it's so difficult to keep them separate. Discussing the ethical dimensions of news coverage of highly charged political topics inevitably threatens to veer away from the coverage and devolve into charges of bias and political "agendas," or even morph into a debate over the policy being reported. In a "red" state such as mine, there are plenty of conservative students in my class who are less likely to question Bush administration motives — and thus look more critically at media coverage that does. This political dynamic is not limited to students; while debating with a colleague the merits of media portrayals of the American coffins returning from Iraq, he said doing so would "hurt the morale of our troops." This was a philosophy professor who, to put it kindly, had a moment of serious confusion over justified means and rational ends — a moment, I would suggest, that had less to do with the duties of the news media and more to do with his sup-

port of Bush administration aims in Iraq.

Politics especially threatens to hijack media ethics discussions on the topic of whether or not to convey graphic images. Images of terrorist carnage and body parts have a peculiar way of triggering political judgments from students who are asked about the ethical dimension of such decisions.

In some ways, this can be good for class discussion. Watching graphic reports of the brutal attacks on the American contractors in Fallujah, for example, prompted intense discussion among students who felt showing the bodies hanging from the bridge was ethically and journalistically unjustifiable and those who felt not doing so threatened to sanitize and distort the actual event. Comments from both ends of the spectrum undoubtedly were motivated in part by political leanings, but for a discussion that addressed fundamental questions about the role of the press, I'll take it.

I found this year that it's increasingly difficult to make sure my ethics students keep their eyes on the ball — to keep their focus on the coverage of political controversies instead of the politics themselves. I'm often prefacing myself with phrases such as, "Regardless of your political views," and "This isn't a political science class, but" And I found it helpful this spring to move up on the calendar the couple of class days I spend talking about bias and summarizing the

research that shows the more strongly we feel on a given issue, the more likely we are to think that media coverage of that issue is slanted against our position. This, of course, is known as the hostile-media phenomenon, and by bringing such media-effects content to bear on media ethics students, I've found that it helps me keep questions of media behavior and questions of politics relatively untangled. It doesn't necessarily pacify the vocal partisans in the classroom, but it provides a way to regularly remind students that bias is a two-way street; it's not just what's on the page or in the video, it's the product of the interaction between content and our own ideologies. In fact, I call it my "perceptions of bias" week, not my "bias in the news media week." The distinction is subtle but important.

I certainly don't want to stifle expressions of political views, particularly when political passions are running high in these historic times. The tension created between the overlap of media ethics discussions and politics is a tension to be managed, not prohibited. As with so many other things, it's all in the execution and the degree of frankness about where we're coming from. Politics is not going to leave the classroom anytime soon, but it can be a good opportunity to remind students that our responses to words and pictures say as much or more about our own ideologies as they do about the ethics behind the words and pictures themselves.

Media Ethics Division sessions and meetings, AEJMC 2004 Convention, Toronto

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 4, 2004

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Media Ethics Division and Council of Affiliates Teaching Panel Session: *Ethics and the Journalism Educator: What Students Need to Know in the Age of the Bottom Line.*

Moderating/Presiding: Barbara Zang, Worcester State

Panelists: Sandra L. Borden, Western Michigan; Romayne Smith Fullerton, Western Ontario; Catherine McKercher, Carleton; Glenn Ritt, Executive Director, CapeCorps; Margaret Sullivan, Editor, *The Buffalo News*

1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Media Ethics and Public Relations Divisions PF&R Panel Session: *Public Relations and the Problem of Positioning Companies in Foreign Nations: Conflicting Loyalties?*

Moderating/Presiding: Daradirek "Gee" Ekachai, Marquette

Panelists: Gary Myers, CEO and President, Morgan & Myers, Milwaukee, Wis.; Karen Slattery, Marquette; Daradirek "Gee" Ekachai, Marquette; John Paluszek, APR, Fellow PRSA, Ketchum USA

3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Media Ethics Division Refereed Paper Research Session: *Plagiarism, Sensationalism and Journalists' Ethical Roles*

Moderating/Presiding: Stephen Ward, British Columbia

• *What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke Say About the Press and the Erosion of Public Trust** — Maggie Jones Patterson and Steve Urbanski, Duquesne

• *Sensationalism in America's Television Newsrooms and the Ethics of Media Supervisors: A Secondary Analysis* — Aimee Barrows, Northern Illinois

• *The Last Line of Defense in Matters of Ethics? Copy Editors' Ethics Role Conceptions* — Susan Keith, Rutgers**

• *Newsroom Ethics: Peeling the Onion* — Dan Shaver, Central Florida

* Winner, Top Faculty Paper

** Winner, Professional Relevance Award

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Media Ethics Division Refereed Paper Research Session:

Media Ethics Education and Journalistic Values

Moderating/Presiding: Genelle Belmas, California State-Long Beach

• *The Media Ethics Necessity** — Jenn Burleson Mackay, Alabama

• *Misplaced Confidence? The Validity of the Media Ethics Course* — Lee Anne Peck, Northern Colorado

• *The Exception or the Rule? How Journalists View the Prevalence and Acceptability of Problematic Practices* — Scott Reinardy and Stephanie Craft, Missouri

• *Journalists' Moral Development: Thinking Through Both Rights and Care in a Professional Setting* — Lee Wilkins, Missouri, and Renita Coleman, Louisiana State

* Winner, Carol Burnett/University of Hawaii/AEJMC Prize

THURSDAY, AUG. 5, 2004

11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Communication Technology and Policy and Media Ethics Divisions PF&R Panel Session:

Online Journalism Ethics: New Bottle for Old Wine?

Moderating/Presiding: Jane B. Singer, Iowa

Panelists: Robert Berkman, New School, Author, *Digital Dilemmas: Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals*; Constance Davis, Purdue; Angus Frame, Editor, globeandmail.com; Bruce Henderson, Colorado; Nora Paul, Minnesota

1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Refereed Paper Poster Session: *Scholar-to-Scholar, Media Ethics Division*

• *Finding Global Values in Journalism Ethics: A Comparative Analysis of Five News Council Rulings** — Bastiaan Vanacker, Minnesota

• *How Moral and Cognitive Psychology Can Enhance the Teaching and Practice of Public Relations Ethics* — Matthew Cabot, California State-Long Beach

• *Ethics of Newspapers in Prison Communities: Imprisoned by Their Economic Role?* — Michael L. Thurwanger, Bradley and Walter B. Jaehnig, Southern Illinois

• *Dos and Don'ts for Moonlighting Journalists: An International Comparison* — Yehiel Limor, Tel-Aviv, and Itai Himelboim, Minnesota

• *Dance With the Devil: Did CNN Trade Truth for Access?* — Laura Resnick, Ohio

Discussant: Patrick Plaisance, Colorado State

* Runner-up, Carol Burnett/University of Hawaii/AEJMC Prize

3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Media Ethics and Cultural and Critical Studies Divisions Teaching Panel

A Nationwide Endeavor: Tackling Media Literacy in Canada

Moderating/Presiding: Wendy N. Barger, St. Thomas

Panelists: Paul Baines, Media Education Activist, Organizer for Media Democracy Day, Toronto; Malanie Cishecki, Executive Director, MediaWatch, Toronto; Barry Duncan, Author, Educator, Founder, Past President, Association for Media Literacy, Ontario, Canada; Carly Stasko, Media Activist, Educator, "Culture Jammer," Toronto; Jane Tallim, Education Program Director, Media Awareness Network, Ottawa, Canada

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Media Ethics Division Refereed Paper Session:

Media Literacy: Exploring Connections Between Media Literacy and Media Ethics

Moderating/Presiding: Wendy N. Barger, St. Thomas

• *"I Noticed More Violence:" The Effects of a Media Literacy Program on Knowledge and Attitudes About Media Violence** — Erica Scharrer, Massachusetts-Amherst

• *Reaching Beyond the Academy: Introducing Elementary School Students to Media Literacy and Critical Thinking* — Angela Paradise and Andrea Bergstrom, Massachusetts

• *Plato's Worst Nightmare: Impact of the "New Orality" on Media Literacy and Ethos* — Charles Marsh, Kansas

• *Communitarianism and Dr. Phil: The Individualistic Ethos of "Self-Help" Television* — Eric K. Jones, Clafflin

* Winner, Top Media Literacy Paper



Details:

- ◆ **What:** 2004 AEJMC Convention
- ◆ **When:** Aug. 4-7
- ◆ **Where:** Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, 123 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario
- ◆ **Keynote:** Pamela Wallin, Canada's Consul General to New York City, as the keynote speaker for the Toronto Convention. Wallin will address the convention on Wed., Aug. 4 from 6:45 to 8 p.m.
- ◆ **Papers:** Read paper abstracts online at <http://www.aejmc.org/convention/2004abstracts/04paperabstracts.html>.
- ◆ **Info:** Get convention information online at <http://www.aejmc.org/convention>

Media Ethics Division sessions and meetings, AEJMC 2004 Convention, Toronto

8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Media Ethics Division Members' Meeting

Moderating/Presiding: Sandra L. Borden, Western Michigan

10:15 p.m. to 11:45 p.m.

Media Ethics Division Executive Committee Meeting

Moderating/Presiding: Kris Bunton, St. Thomas

FRIDAY, AUG. 6, 2004

8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Religion and Media Interest Group and Media Ethics Division PF&R Panel Session:

Religious Perspectives on Public Policy News Coverage: No-No or 21st Century Necessity?

Moderating/Presiding: Edmund Lambeth, Missouri

Panelists: Sylvia Stead, Executive Director, *The Toronto Globe & Mail*; Wahid Saleh, Utah; Susan Hogan, *Dallas Morning News*; Anantha S. Babbili, Middle Tennessee State; Respondent: Michael A. Longinow, Asbury

1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

International Communication, Media Ethics and Newspaper Divisions and Religion and Media Interest Group Mini-plenary Research Panel Session: U.S. and International Coverage of the Iraq War: How the Politics of Fear, Cross-cultural Biases and Religious Views Construct It

Moderating/Presiding: Robyn S. Goodman, Alred

Panelists: Philip Seib, Marquette; Chris Paterson, San Francisco; Fred Blevens, Oklahoma; Cynthia Boaz, San Francisco; Michael Longinow, Asbury; Changho Lee, Texas at Austin

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Cultural and Critical Studies and Media Ethics Divisions PF&R Panel Session:

Critical Perspectives on Media Convergence

Moderating/Presiding: Karen E. Kline, Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania

Panelists: James K. Gentry, Kansas; Jane B. Singer, Iowa; Dane S. Claussen, Point Park; Tom Bivins, Oregon

6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.

Media Ethics and Law Divisions PF&R Panel Session:

A Conflict of Laws: American Media Coverage of Canadian Crimes

Moderating/Presiding: Jack Breslin, Iona

Panelists: Jane Kirtley, Minnesota; Christie Blatchford, Columnist, *Toronto Globe and Mail*; Paul Schabas, Media Lawyer, Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP, Toronto; Tim Danson, Attorney, Danson Recht Voudouris, Barristers & Solicitors

Discussant: Richard Peltz, Arkansas at Little Rock

SATURDAY, AUG. 7, 2004

8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Media Ethics Division and Community College Journalism Association Research Panel Session:

The Offense of Ad Offensiveness: Incorporating Cultural Values, Ethics and Norms in Strategic Communications

Moderating/Presiding: Timothy Christy, St. Thomas

Topics and Panelists: *Poor Ethics, or Just Poor Taste: A Look at Offensive Advertising*, Anne-Lauren Cunningham, Louisiana State; *Offensive Advertising According to the UK Advertising Standards Authority*, Ryan Taylor, Marketing Executive, UK Advertising Standards Authority and the Committee of Advertising Practice, London; *Ca Me Blesse: Offensiveness in French Advertising*, Ronald E. Taylor, Tennessee; *Offensive Advertising in Australasia*, David Waller, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, Australia; *Offensiveness in Italian Advertising: The Case of Benetton*, Ines Anselma, CLAP Eventi & Comunicazione, Conegliano, Italy

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Public Relations and Media Ethics Divisions Teaching Panel Session: Ethics Courses: What's Their Real Value?

Moderating/Presiding: Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, DePaul

Topics and Panelists: *Effects of a Media Ethics Course on Students' Ethical Decision-making Abilities*, Lee Anne Peck, Northern Colorado; *Young Professionals' Assessment of Ethics Training*, Kristie Bunton, St. Thomas and Kendra Gale, Colorado; *The Real World v. The Classroom: Student Feedback*, Kevin Stoker, Brigham Young

11:45 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Media Ethics Workshop: The Impact of Infotainment on Democracy and Media Ethics and Teaching Bootcamp

Moderating/Presiding: William Babcock, California State-Long Beach

Luncheon and Keynote speaker: *Infotainment: Facing the Enemy*, James Upshaw, Oregon

Topics and Panelists: *Jesse to Arnold: Trend or Aberration*, William Babcock, California State-Long Beach; *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Eroding Boundaries Between News and Entertainment and What They Mean for American Democracy*, Bruce Williams, Illinois

Case Studies: *News and Celebrity*

Topics and Panelists: *The "West Wing" Factor*, Debashis Aikat, North Carolina; *The Royals*, Elizabeth Blanks Hindman, Washington State; *Martha Stewart*, David Craig, Oklahoma; *Infotainment in Canada*, Romayne Smith Fullerton, Western Ontario

Ethics Bootcamp

Topics and Panelists: *Introducing Ethical Theory in Applied Ethics Classes*, Maggie Patterson, Duquesne; *Selecting Case Studies and Applying Theory to Cases*, Lee Wilkins, Missouri; *Course Structure and Assessing Student Learning*, Virginia Whitehouse, Whitworth



Media Ethics Division

Using "Shattered Glass" in the media ethics classroom

Genelle Belmas
MED secretary

The *New York Times* hailed it as "a tale of moral uplift." The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it "a surprisingly gripping thriller" and "good, solid entertainment built around a compelling subject." These accolades may make "Shattered Glass" (2003) good viewing in a movie theater or on a Friday night at home on a DVD player, but journalism ethics instructors are probably looking for something more than mere amusement if they want to use it as a teaching tool in their classrooms.

We all know the story of Stephen Glass: young upstart journalist at *The New Republic*, turning heads with his ability to find amazing stories fast, revealed as having made most of it up. The story that the reporters at Forbes Digital Tool targeted was entitled "Hack Heaven," but *The New Republic* admits he fabricated all or parts of 27 out of 41 stories he wrote for the magazine. Glass' name joins those of Janet Cooke, Patricia Smith, Mike Barnicle, and most recently Jayson Blair, in the journalism halls of shame. In 2003, he published a book titled *The Fabulist*, the plot of which is based on a familiar set of facts: young promising journalist caught fabricating stories to advance his career... Glass isn't the only disgraced journalist writing books. Blair's offering, *Burning Down My Master's House*, is, according to many reviews, a self-diagnosis of why he did what he did at the *New York Times*. Blair's own Web site, <http://www.jayson-blair.com>, offers a few sample pages of the book, and on page one he blames the Times: "In the end-justifies-the-means environment I worked in, I had grown accustomed to lying."

What's Teachable Here?

Glass' story is, at its foundation, no different from those of Cooke and Blair: he made his stories up. Perhaps he covered his tracks in creative ways, such as phony voice mail and fabricated websites, but in the end, he lied. So what is "teachable" in Glass' version of the ethics narrative?

The producers of "Shattered Glass" apparently believe that there is a lot there that could be useful for journalism teachers. A visit to the

movie's Web site (<http://www.shatteredglass-movie.com>) and a click on the "Teachers Guides" link pops up a window where three files can be downloaded—an activity guide, a teachers' guide, and a library guide. These are Adobe Acrobat files, two to four pages in length, that provide teachers with activities for students to do after viewing the film. These mini-assignments range from researching other fallen journalists like Cooke and Blair to looking at an actual newspaper and making fact-checking recommendations.

One objection that journalism professors might have is the "slickness" with which these guides were produced. They are filled with images of the actors and scenes in the film, and, because of this, are much longer than they would need to be. As well, the activities in them would take more time than many journalism professors may want to spend on a single topic like plagiarism or lying. That said, the guides are ready-to-use handouts that would work well if the entire film was shown.

There are many clips in "Shattered Glass" that could serve as kick-offs for class discussion. The segment where Glass must defend his story not only to Chuck Lane, his editor, but also to the reporters at Forbes Digital Tool who have already done their homework and are methodically tearing his work to shreds, is particularly compelling. It's clear that Glass is under the gun and flying by the seat of his pants.

And, the scene when Glass and Lane have gone to meeting locations alleged in one of Glass' fabricated stories, and Glass insists that editors are supposed to stand up for their reporters, is also poignant. Both Glass and Lane are anguished when it becomes more and more apparent that Glass has lied. It is difficult not to feel some small nugget of sympathy for Glass when he realizes he's being discovered, and when he's trying to backpedal and find some explanation for his deceit.

"Notoriety-for-Profit"

After having viewed the movie several times, the ethical conundrum that sticks in my mind is not the timeworn story of "journalists don't lie, they only report facts." It is that

Glass' novel, *The Fabulist*, trades on his journalistic wrongdoings. Like criminals who sell movie and book rights to their stories after their crimes, this smacks of ill-gotten gain. Journalists usually do not get rich from their journalistic work; the satisfaction comes from doing the job well and enriching the public knowledge, or getting the bad guys.

What incentive is there, then, for a journalist not to do something bad (anything, not just fabrication), suffering through the big industry blow-up about it, and then profiting from the aftermath?

"Son of Sam" laws, also known as "notoriety-for-profit" laws, exist in about 40 states. These laws forbid criminals from profiting from their crimes by awarding all proceeds from their creative works to the state. Courts have not looked kindly on such laws; the Supreme Court struck down New York's version in 1991, while California's was

Continued on the next page



A guide for using the film "Shattered Glass" in journalism classes is provided via the film's Web site, www.shatteredglassmovie.com.

Be more than a member ...

MED needs nominees for officers

Kris Buntun

MED vice head/programming chair

One of the ways members can help guarantee the health and success of the Media Ethics Division is service as a division officer. In Toronto, we'll elect a new slate of MED leaders at our members meeting from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 5, and I'd like you to think about serving.

Please nominate yourself or a colleague for any of the following positions: 1) **secretary/newsletter editor**, which is a three-year commitment that will lead to service as vice head/programming chair in 2005-2006 and service as division head in 2006-2007; 2) **research chair**, which involves coordinating the review and selection of convention research papers; 3) **teaching standards chair**, which involves developing convention programming and newsletter content on teaching issues; 4) **professional freedom and responsibility chair**, which involves developing convention programming and newsletter content on crucial current issues; and 5) **liaisons** to other AEJMC divisions and professional organizations, such as the Law Division and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Send nominations for these offices to me via e-mail at kebunton@stthomas.edu. I will offer a slate of nominations at the members meeting, and additional nominations from the floor will be welcome



before officers are elected by the membership.

This year, I will also ask the membership to confirm the appointment of a vice head/programming chair for 2004-2005. This appointment is necessary because our current secretary/newsletter editor has accepted a new faculty position and needs to concentrate on the responsibilities concomitant with that position. Because she is stepping aside after serving the first year of her three-year term, we need someone to fill the remaining two years, serving in 2004-2005 as vice head and in 2005-2006 as division head. Given the extensive year-round responsibilities that come with these offices, I wish to solicit interest in this appointment well before the members meeting, to give the nominee sufficient time to consider the commitment.

If you are interested in serving this two-year term as vice head and division head, please contact me as soon as possible via e-mail to kebunton@stthomas.edu. After consulting with Sandy Borden, current division head, I will then select and present an appointee for confirmation by the membership at the members meeting.

An executive committee meeting of all newly elected and appointed officers will

immediately follow the MED members meeting.

Training for incoming officers in all divisions will be from 8:45 to 10 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 7.

Using 'Shattered Glass' in the classroom

overturned by the California Supreme Court in 2002.

Clearly, the transgressions of Blair and Glass do not rise to the level of murder. However, there are parallels to "notoriety-for-profit" in their situations.

Glass took a beating from many in the journalistic community not only for his transgressions but also for his profiteering on his downfall. *Slate* reports that Glass appeared at a 2003 ethics panel at George Washington University, where he completed his law degree. Andrew Sullivan, the editor at *The New Republic* who had hired Glass, asked him how he dared appear on an ethics panel and defend his decision to make money from his offenses. Rather than get

angry, Glass merely said he did not know how he could demonstrate his remorse. (Read the entire scathing *Slate* article, titled "Half a Glass: The incomplete contrition of serial liar Stephen Glass," at <http://slate.msn.com/id/2091015/>.)

If ethics professors are interested in exploring the issues raised about fabrication, the editorial process, or editorial standards, the handouts provided at the film's website have some excellent exercises and review questions that this article need not summarize. However, here are a few questions loosely based on the "notoriety-for-profit" issue.

Is it morally acceptable for Glass and Blair to make money from their ethics violations? Why or why not?

Should existing "Son of Sam" laws be applied in cases where journalists are the offenders? If so, in what ways? Who, for example, should get the proceeds from sales of Glass' and Blair's books?

Would it have made any difference had Glass' and Blair's books been about something unrelated to journalism or their own moral wrongdoings? What if, for example, Glass had written a book on fly fishing after he left *The New Republic*? (He would be, after all, still trading on his name, made famous by his misdeeds.)

Is there a way to resolve this problem? How do you balance the idea of a free press and free commercial enterprise with notions of journalism ethics and responsibility?

2003-2004 MED officers

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